For staff only. Keep this page at the desk: it has the code.

Library Mystery Hunt: The Case of the Secret Shelf

A free riddle trail for your children's area, ages 4 to 10.

Set up

1. Print pages 1 to 9 once, single-sided at actual size: this page, the Start Here sign, the six clue signs and the Secret Shelf sign.
2. Make copies: page 10 (notebooks) one sheet for every 2 kids; page 11 (final riddles) one sheet for every 4 kids; page 12 (take-home hunt) one sheet per family.
3. Tape the Start Here sign at the desk, with the notebooks and pencils.
4. Tape each clue sign at its spot (table below), at a child's eye level. On a big section, use the end of the first shelf, facing the aisle.
5. Pick a spot for the Secret Shelf (a shelf, a box, a basket or a table) and tape up its sign. Put the take-home hunts there, plus anything you like (stickers, bookmarks, a book display: write it on the sign's "Also here" line). That's where the final riddle sends kids.
6. Walk the loop once before you open.

You need: tape, scissors, pencils. Nice to have: sheet protectors and painter's tape for the signs, stickers.

At the desk

> *"Want to be a detective? Here's a notebook and a pencil. Pick a level, start at any shape sign, and bring me your six numbers."*

- Check the six numbers against the desk strip, in shape order. Backwards numbers count.
- A number off? Help them check that shape's answer. Finishing with help counts.
- A sign went missing? Give them that shape's number from the desk strip, tell them the next spot, and reprint the sign.
- Right code: read the final riddle with them, hand it over, and make one tally mark. No strips left? Read it aloud from page 11.
- Kids keep their notebooks. The library keeps only the tally.

Tally: one mark per child who cracks the code

The route: each sign's riddle leads to the next row's spot, and the last leads back to the first

Sign	Tape it at	Its riddle leads to	Number
○ Circle	the picture books (end of the first shelf, facing the aisle)	children's computers	**7**
□ Square	the children's computers (on the table end, not a screen)	reading chairs	**3**
△ Triangle	the reading chairs or reading nook	children's new books	**9**
☆ Star	the children's new books display (not the adult one)	chapter books	**4**
♡ Heart	the chapter books (end of the first shelf, facing the aisle)	story time spot	**6**
◇ Diamond	the story time rug or corner (not a closed room)	picture books	**8**

Missing one of these spots, or want your own? Use Make it yours at hidequest.com/libraries/mystery-hunt to move any sign, then print your kit. Page 13 has stand-ins on paper. Cut the pieces apart as you need. Keep the footer on full-page copies.

Ran it, or something didn't work? Tell us at dan@hidequest.com. We read every note.

Desk strip: cut along the dashed line and keep it on your side of the desk

The code ○ □ △ ☆ ♡ ◇

7 3 9 4 6 8

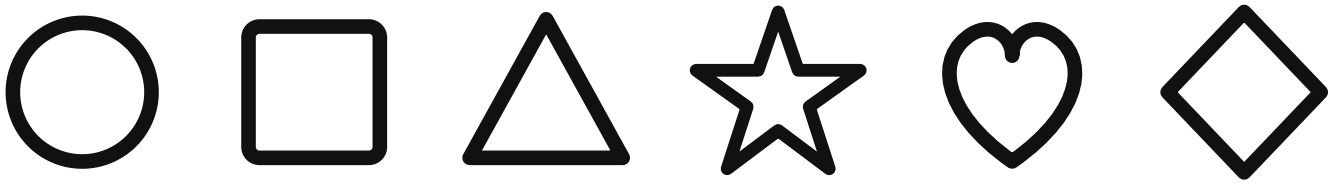
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Detectives wanted!

The Case of the Secret Shelf

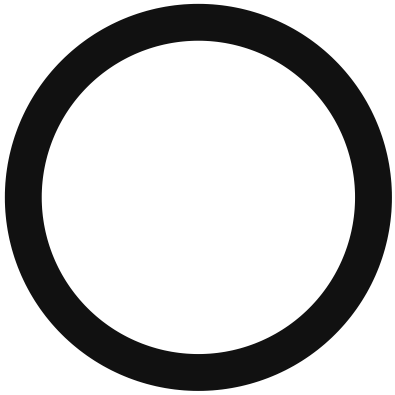
Six shape signs are hiding in the children's area. Solve each one, crack the six-number code, and find the Secret Shelf.

1. Take a detective notebook and a pencil.
2. Pick your level:
   - 🔍 I can count
   - 🔍🔍 I can add and take away
   - 🔍🔍🔍 I know my times tables
3. Start at any shape sign. Bring your six numbers back here.



For ages 4 to 10. Grown-ups, please read along.

Free. Nothing to sign up for.



The Circle Clue

Count the footprints



4 + 3 = ?

3 × 4 − 5 = ?

Pick one. All three give the same number.

Write it in the ◯ box in your notebook.

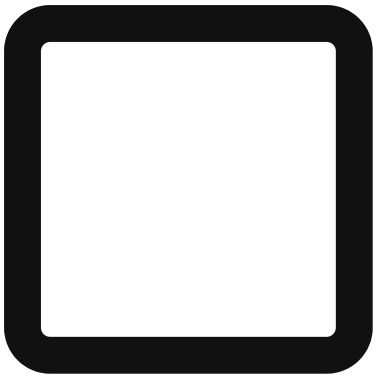
Where to go next:

Keys that click and screens that glow
help you find the books you know.
Go where the kids' computers are:
the next clue isn't very far.

Want to play? Get a detective notebook and a pencil at the desk.

Please leave this sign here for the next detective.

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The Square Clue

Count the footprints



11 – 8 = ?

3 × 5 – 12 = ?

Pick one. All three give the same number.

Write it in the ☐ box in your notebook.

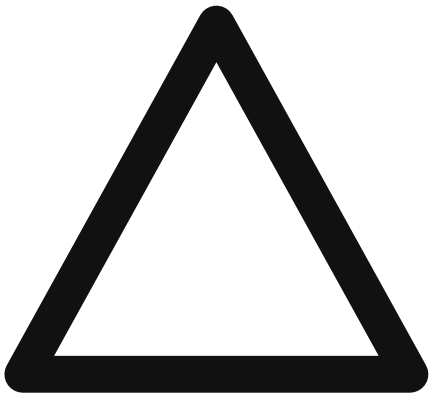
Where to go next:

A soft, snug seat to curl up and read:
a comfy chair is all you need.
Go to the reading chairs and see:
the next clue's waiting patiently.

Want to play? Get a detective notebook and a pencil at the desk.

Please leave this sign here for the next detective.

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The Triangle Clue

Count the footprints



6 + 3 = ?

2 × 7 − 5 = ?

Pick one. All three give the same number.

Write it in the △ box in your notebook.

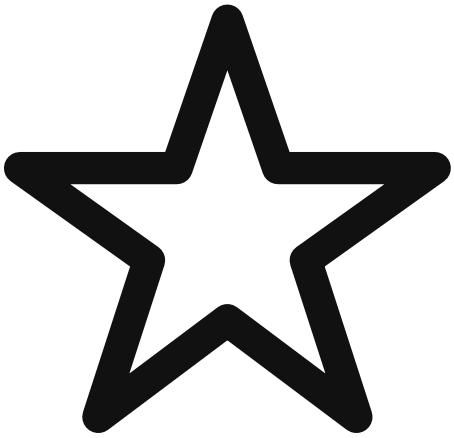
Where to go next:

Shiny covers, fresh and new,
stand up tall to welcome you.
Look at the kids' new books on display:
the next clue's waiting there today.

Want to play? Get a detective notebook and a pencil at the desk.

Please leave this sign here for the next detective.

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The Star Clue

Count the footprints



10 – 6 = ?

4 × 4 – 12 = ?

Pick one. All three give the same number.

Write it in the ☆ box in your notebook.

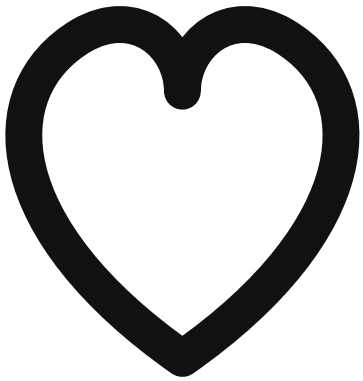
Where to go next:

Books with chapters, one, two, three,
stand in rows for you and me.
Look where the chapter books are lined:
the next clue's there for you to find.

Want to play? Get a detective notebook and a pencil at the desk.

Please leave this sign here for the next detective.

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The Heart Clue

Count the footprints



12 – 6 = ?

5 × 3 – 9 = ?

Pick one. All three give the same number.

Write it in the ♡ box in your notebook.

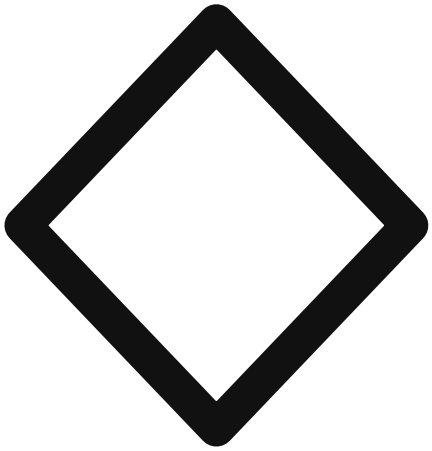
Where to go next:

Where we gather on the floor
to hear a tale and ask for more,
go to the story time spot and look:
the next clue's waiting by a book.

Want to play? Get a detective notebook and a pencil at the desk.

Please leave this sign here for the next detective.

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The Diamond Clue

Count the footprints



5 + 3 = ?

6 × 2 − 4 = ?

Pick one. All three give the same number.

Write it in the ◇ box in your notebook.

Where to go next:

Bright pictures fill up every page,
a treat for readers any age.
Look where the picture books are found:
the next clue's waiting, safe and sound.

Want to play? Get a detective notebook and a pencil at the desk.

Please leave this sign here for the next detective.

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The Secret Shelf

You found it, detective!

Cracked the code? Your next case is waiting here: a treasure hunt to take home and play with your family.

Also here: _____

Take one home!

No code yet? Get a detective notebook and a pencil at the desk.

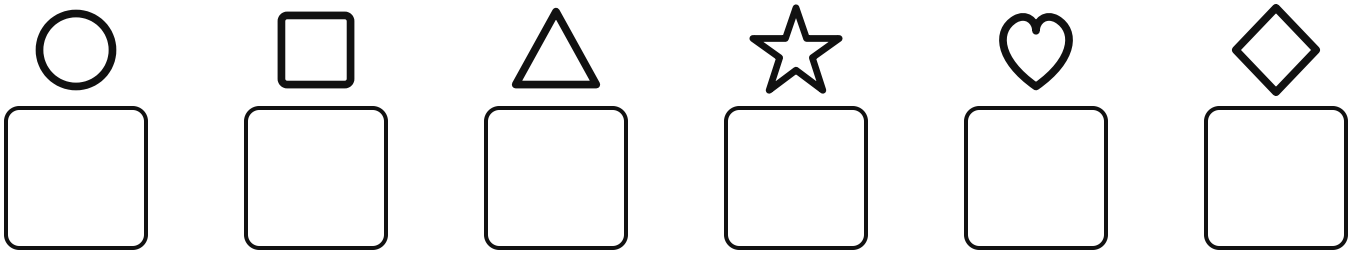
Detective Notebook

Detective name: _____

1. Pick your level and circle it. Any level gets the right number.

   I can count | I can add and take away | I know my times tables

2. Start at any shape sign. Write its number in the box with the same shape.
3. Read "Where to go next" on the sign to find the next one. Stop when all six boxes are full.



All six boxes full? Bring this notebook to the desk. It's yours to keep. The Case of the Secret Shelf

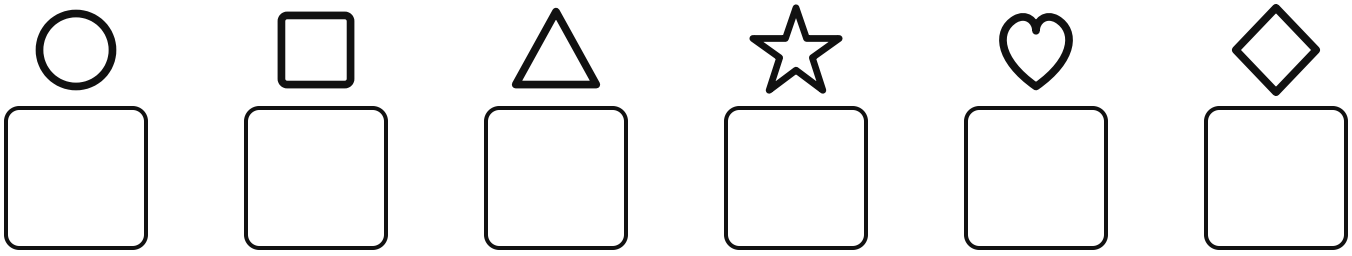
Detective Notebook

Detective name: _____

1. Pick your level and circle it. Any level gets the right number.

   I can count | I can add and take away | I know my times tables

2. Start at any shape sign. Write its number in the box with the same shape.
3. Read "Where to go next" on the sign to find the next one. Stop when all six boxes are full.



All six boxes full? Bring this notebook to the desk. It's yours to keep. The Case of the Secret Shelf

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Case cracked! The final riddle

You cracked the code, detective, hooray!
The Secret Shelf is not far away.
Find its sign and look nearby:
your next case is waiting. Give it a try!

Case cracked! The final riddle

You cracked the code, detective, hooray!
The Secret Shelf is not far away.
Find its sign and look nearby:
your next case is waiting. Give it a try!

Case cracked! The final riddle

You cracked the code, detective, hooray!
The Secret Shelf is not far away.
Find its sign and look nearby:
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Case cracked! The final riddle

You cracked the code, detective, hooray!
The Secret Shelf is not far away.
Find its sign and look nearby:
your next case is waiting. Give it a try!

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Case closed! Now a treasure hunt at home

For grown-ups: cut out the five clue cards and the grown-up card. No phone or sign-up needed.

1. Hide card 2 on the fridge door, card 3 by the bathtub, card 4 under a pillow and card 5 in a shoe.
2. Hide a small treasure (a note, a sticker or a favorite toy) and keep the grown-up card. Hand your detective card 1 and a pencil.
3. On each card, count the circles or solve the problem. Same answer! Write it in the boxes on card 1.

Optional: get another free home hunt
hidequest.com/free-treasure-hunt

Card 1 — Hand this one over

I keep the milk and apples cold.
Look on my door, if you are bold!

Count: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Solve: 12 − 7 = __

Keep this card! Write each card's number here: ☐☐☐☐☐

Card 2 — Hide on the fridge door

Splish and splash, I hold your bath.
Peek by the tub to find your path!

Count: ○ ○

Solve: 9 − 7 = __

Card 3 — Hide by the bathtub

Soft and fluffy, I rest your head.
Look under the pillow on your bed!

Count: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Solve: 3 + 5 = __

Card 4 — Hide under a pillow

I go on your feet when you go outside.
Look in a shoe, where toes like to hide!

Count: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Solve: 14 − 8 = __

Card 5 — Hide in a shoe

Show your code to a grown-up here.
If it's right, your treasure's near!

Count: ○ ○ ○ ○

Solve: 2 + 2 = __

Grown-up card — Keep this one

The code is 5 2 8 6 4. When your detective shows it, read: "Your treasure is hiding _____!"

Missing a spot? Swap it

Move that shape's sign to a stand-in spot below, then change the riddle on the sign before it. The easiest way: use Make it yours at hidequest.com/libraries/mystery-hunt. Move any signs, even to a spot you type, and it prints your kit with the right riddles. Already printed? It can print just the pages that change. Or write the stand-in riddle on a slip and tape it over the old one.

No spot for	Move this sign to a stand-in	Change the riddle on
picture books	Circle	Diamond
children's computers	Square	Circle
reading chairs	Triangle	Square
children's new books	Star	Triangle
chapter books	Heart	Star
story time spot	Diamond	Heart

Stand-in spots and their riddles

Leads to a window in the children's area

I let the sunshine fill the room.
I show the rain; I show the moon.
Look near a window, by the glass:
the next clue's waiting. Don't let it pass!

Leads to the toys or play area

Blocks to stack and toys to share,
puppets peeking here and there.
Look where kids come in to play:
the next clue's hiding there today.

Leads to the puzzles and games

Pieces that fit and games to play,
on shelves or tables, put away.
Look where the puzzles and games are stacked:
the next clue's waiting, that's a fact!

Leads to the children's bulletin board

Notes and pictures, pinned in view,
tell what's happening for you.
Look at the board where notices go:
the next clue's waiting there, you know.

Leads to the children's audiobooks

Stories you can hear, not see,
read aloud for you and me.
Look where the audiobooks are found:
the next clue's there, just look around.

Leads to the children's nonfiction

Facts about the stars and seas,
dinosaurs and honeybees:
find the true books, row by row.
The next clue's there. Ready, go!

Walk the loop again after a swap. The shapes, the math and the code stay the same, so nothing changes at the desk.

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